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Hundreds killed in tsunami after 8.9 Japan quake



This aerial shot shows houses in flame after being hit by the tsunami at Natori City, Japan (AFP)



Fishing boats and vehicles are carried by a tsunami wave at Onahama port in Iwaki city, Japan (AFP)



An aerial shot shows vehicles ready for shipping being carried by a tsunami tidal wave at Hitachinaka city, in Ibaraki prefecture, Japan. (AFP)



Vehicles are crushed by a collapsed road at a carpark in Yabuki, in southern Fukushima Prefecture, Japan. (AFP)



Tsunami waves swirl near a port in Oarai, Ibaraki Prefecture.

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TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC

Hundreds dead in Japanese quake-tsunami disaster

TOKYO, Japan (AFP) – The strongest quake ever recorded in Japan Friday unleashed a monster tsunami that claimed hundreds of lives, and a minister warned there could be a discharge of radiation from a nuclear plant.

The monster wall of water generated by the 8.9-magnitude earthquake -- the seventh biggest in history -- pulverised the northeastern city of Sendai, where police reportedly said that 200-300 bodies had been found on the coast. Kyodo News said the final death toll was likely to pass 1,000.

The 10-meter (33-foot) wave of black water sent shipping containers, cars and debris crashing through the streets of Sendai and across open farmland, while a tidal wave of debris-littered mud destroyed everything in its

path.

At least 337 people were killed in the earthquake and subsequent tsunamis, police and press reports said.

The National Police Agency said 137 people had been confirmed dead and 531 missing, with 627 others injured in the tremor, and a spokesman said this did not include the bodies reportedly found on the Sendai coast.

Japan's military mobilised thousands of troops, 300 planes and 40 ships for the relief effort.

The wave set off tsunami alerts across the Pacific, as far away as South America, New Zealand and Hawaii, which was hit by a surge of up to 1.8 metres (six feet) after authorities evacuated low-lying areas. California and Oregon were also on alert, with the Los Angeles county fire captain warning a surge could impact the coastline. At least 35 boats were crushed in the harbor of a northern Californian community hit by waves from the tsunami.

A Japanese ship with 100 people aboard was reportedly carried away, more than 300 houses were destroyed in the remote city of Ofunato and a dam broke in the northeast prefecture of Fukushima, with homes washed away.

There was also major disruption to air travel and bullet train services. A passenger train with an unknown number of people aboard was unaccounted for on a line outside Sendai, Kyodo News reported.

The government said the tsunami and quake, which was felt in Beijing some 2,500 kilometres (1,500 miles) away, had caused "tremendous damage", while aerial footage showed massive flooding in northern towns.

The Japanese government

declared an atomic emergency and told thousands of residents living near a nuclear plant in Fukushima to evacuate, warning a small amount of radiation could be released.

Trade minister Banri Kaieda said authorities were nearing a decision to release radioactive steam from a troubled nuclear reactor in a bid to ease a pressure build-up after its cooling system was damaged by a massive earthquake.

The World Bank said it was ready to help the recovery effort in quake- and tsunami-struck Japan by mobilizing and deploying specialists to support recovery and reconstruction.

"The World Bank has extensive experience in disaster risk management," the development lender said in a statement.

Although Japan -- as one of the world's richest nations -- has not been eligible for aid from the World Bank since the 1960s, the bank has written to Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan to formally offer assistance.

US President Barack Obama led international offers of sympathy and aid in what he called Japan's "time of great trial", while the Kan government called on help from US forces stationed in the country.

Japan sits on the "Pacific Ring of Fire", which is dotted with volcanoes, and Tokyo is in one of its most dangerous areas, where three continental plates are slowly grinding against each other, building up enormous seismic pressure.

The government has warned of a 70 percent chance that a great, magnitude-eight quake will strike within the next 30 years in the Kanto plains, home to Tokyo's vast urban sprawl.

World tightening noose on Kadhafi, says Obama

WASHINGTON (AFP) - US President Barack Obama warned yesterday the world was "tightening the noose" on Moamer Kadhafi, but admitted he was "concerned" about the Libyan strongman's capacity to cling onto power.

Obama announced he would appoint an envoy to Libyan opposition forces as part of a bid to "change the balance" of the military situation in Libya, and warned the world had an obligation to avoid a Rwanda-style massacre.

The president also defended his efforts to turf Kadhafi out of power so far, amid criticism that he has been too slow or not offered sufficient leadership, adding he was gauging support for a no-fly zone with regional powers.

"Across the board, we are slowly tightening the noose on Kadhafi," Obama said in a White House news conference scheduled to discuss rising energy prices but dominated by the Libyan revolt and the Japanese tsunami tragedy.

But Obama also gave an insight into evolving US policy on Kadhafi's crackdown on Libyan opposition forces and capacity to hang on, edging towards more overt material and political support for opposition forces.

"I am concerned about it. Kadhafi has a stash of weapons, he not only has some troops that remain loyal to him but there are also reports that he's also been hiring mercenaries," Obama said.

"We're going to have to continue to apply pressure," Obama said, adding that the world had to try to "change the balance" militarily in Libya as well as in Kadhafi's inner circle.

But the president did not say specifically whether the United States and its allies had yet considered whether to arm opposition forces.

Washington has already said it would soon send humanitarian aid teams to rebel-held areas of eastern Libya, but warned the move should not be seen as military intervention.

Fishing boats crash, breaking up and tearing



Fishing boats crashed into one another yesterday, in the boat basin at Crescent City, Calif., as one of a series of tsunami surges slams into the harbor, breaking up docks and tearing loose boats.

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News Provider:
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TPEF's Five Million is no luxury for Aruba's Tourism Product



ORANJESTAD -- One of the members of the Tourism Product Enhancement Fund (TPEF), veteran hotelier, Jan Van Nes, after his presentation of the TPEF program to Minister of Tourism, Otmar Oduber, related some aspects of the work of the TPEF members. Van Nes indicated how that the committee began their work way back in October of 2010. After meeting twice and three times weekly for the past months, they were finally able to present a Project Plan in draft form and share their ideas with respect to the improvement of the Aruba Product.

Members of the Fund,

with a view of the needs around the island, divided the Aruba Product into various sectors such as our beaches, the environment, security, investigation, and the development of new attractions and the maintenance of tourism locations.

According to Jan Van Nes, the members of the TPEF Fund believe that the almost 5 million Florins which will become available every year is no luxury, but a definite necessity for the improvement of our product; and that they have the assurance that based on the draft presented, it will indeed benefit and improve the Aruba Tourism Product.

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Center for Women's Development open for business

ORANJESTAD -- This week, Minister of Social Affairs, Michelle Winklaar-Hooyboer, inaugurated a new government Bureau, namely, the Center for the Development of Women (CEDHEM), which is situated in the Stadionweg in Dakota in the new UNOCA offices. This new bureau will resort under the ministry of social affairs, and will act as a central point of contact for all matters relating to women. The office will coordinate all efforts to stimulate the development of women on different areas. They will be the catalyst for referrals of women to the various instances, whether this is governmental or in the private sector. They will be charged with organizing different activities designed to provide relevant information to women in all the barrios. They will also do an inventory of what is necessary so as to comply with the United Nations treaties on the rights of women.

In the minister's discourse, she emphasized the reason for



to those of men. When we place it in the perspective of a "gender gap" there is a discrepancy between males and females in different areas of economic, educational, public health and political participation. The minister continued to remark that one of the cardinal aspects is in the political participation. Aruba, she claims, scored 70 out of 134 among countries in this area. Several countries had similar scores as Aruba, to mention, Uruguay,

for creating a solid base for the change we desire to see.

It is a fact that when women are well fed and has good health, and is well educated, that families flourish. If women can live without worrying about abuse and violence, their families flourish. If women can work and earn salaries equal to that of men for the same types of jobs, and those jobs are available in all areas of our economy, their families will flourish. And when families flourish and are contented, our community, our country will improve and will lead us on to an exceptional future.

The Minister concluded saying: "...I trust we can look back on today and say it was a great beginning, something that has changed the history of women in Aruba. I am convinced that if we are to accomplish this, we will have to stimulate more participation of women in politics. I know that this is not always easy, but nonetheless, very necessary."

She claims that when a woman enters the political arena her life changes. But, according to Michelle Winklaar-Hooyboer, when many women enter politics, politics changes. She concluded saying: "...I hope we can achieve this one day soon."



establishing this bureau, and precisely on the day of the 100th anniversary of the founding of rights of women. Last year she presented the Aruba Report to the special commission of the UN related to the Elimination of Discrimination of Women. Winklaar-Hooyboer, elaborated on the statistics which relate to the situation of the women on Aruba. Here she referred to the statistics with respect to education, the employment sector, public health, security, social sector and politics.

With respect to the statistics, it is evident that the Aruban woman has ample opportunity to develop themselves in the community. However, the same statistics also indicate that the doors are not yet fully open to ascertain that the opportunities are equal

Slovenia, El Salvador, while countries like Namibia, Malawi, Sri Lanka, The Philippines scored much better than Aruba. This, she said, is reason



La Vie Med-Spa opens at SoBe Centre



South Beach Centre -- La Vie Med Spa and Beauty Salon just opened offering a variety of innovative treatments including European Facials and Teen Facials, for oily acne prone skin, Hot & Cold Stone Facials, Micro Needle Therapy designed to penetrate the epidermis and help restore youth and elasticity, Dermafile, for polished perfection, Collagen, Elastin with Paraffin Treatments, Galvanic Facelift for toning, and Blended Peels which erase wrinkles and lighten the skin, with the help of organic fruit and vitamins.

La Vie Med Spa also offered a complete menu of body massages, wraps and exfoliation, utilizing Dead Sea Salts, Chamomile Mud, Seaweed Mud, Paraffin, Sugar, Geranium, Sage and Salt and naturally, Aruba's famous Aloe, to truly invigorate and detoxify body skin. The just-opened spa offers interesting Exfoliation and Wrap combos as well as more advanced as-seen-on-TV options such as Spider

Vein Therapy, Pre and Post Plastic Surgery treatments, Cellulite Treatments, Tattoo Removals, Laser Hair Removal, Waxing, Permanent Make Up, Make Up for special occasion, the latest in Cosmetic Dental Whitening and a full service hair salon.

Naturally, no spa is complete without a detailed Hand & Foot Care menu, with a special Hand Rejuvenation Treatment offered to moisturize aging dry and rough hands.

La Vie Med Spa is available to receive birthday celebrations and bachelorette parties, with complimentary sauna use, herbal teas and more, for a minimum of 6 people.

The brand new spa is beautifully appointed and decorated to help patrons reach the state of ultimate beauty in a most relaxing, gracious environment. La Vie MedSpa@gmail.com, located upstairs behind J.H. Yee Asian Bistro, ample parking on site.

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"Three Kings of the Sea" offered at Burger King for Lent



Anna Maria Ramirez shows off the Lent specials

The Burger King franchise of Aruba is ever mindful that many give up meat for Lent, and so are offering three tempting fish choices on their menu over the coming days until Easter. "Three Kings of the Sea" are super-stuffed fish fillet sandwiches which can be enjoyed with a choice of french fries, salad or onion rings and a drink in their value priced, Value Meal

Combos, or alone.

Devotees of the BK Whopper with cheese can enjoy all the extras they are accustomed to, but with a fish alternative, with the BK Fish D-luxe sandwich. The popular BK Fish Fillet, a regular party of their menu, garnished with lettuce and tarter sauce and the BK Fish Honey Mustard with cheese, round out this varied selection.

Island media were invited to sample the new menu choices at their Burger King outlet in the Arawak Gardens in Palm Beach, which can also be enjoyed at their San Nicolas and Oranjestad locations.

General consensus was BK Three Kings of the Sea are an excellent alternative to burgers and worth a visit to Burger King if giving up meat for Lent, or not.



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Sci-Tech

Apple's iPad 2 hits stores



WASHINGTON (AFP) — Apple's new iPad went on sale on Friday as the gadget-maker seeks to stay a step ahead of its rivals in the booming market for sleek touchscreen tablet computers.

Apple began taking online orders overnight for the iPad 2, which chief executive Steve Jobs unveiled last week, and the device is to go on sale at the company's 236 US stores starting at 5:00 pm (2200 GMT).

The iPad 2, which is one-third thinner, nearly 15 percent lighter and faster than the model released in April, will be available in two dozen other countries later this month.

Besides the size and weight, the other major improvement to the new iPad is the addition of front- and rear-facing cameras that allow users to take still pictures and video and hold video conversations.

Apple sold 15 million iPads last year, bringing in \$10 billion in new revenue and creating an entirely new category of consumer electronics devices.

Dozens of other companies have been scrambling since then to bring their own tablets to market, most of them relying on Google's Android software.

But with the exception of the Galaxy Tab from South Korea's Samsung, rival tablet-makers have enjoyed little success.

Technology research firm Gartner is forecasting sales of 55 million tablet computers worldwide this year and another research firm, Forrester, said Apple has little to worry about for now.

"Competing tablets to the iPad are poised to fail, which is why we're forecasting that

Apple will have at least 80 percent share of the US consumer tablet market in 2011," Forrester said.

The iPad 2 received mostly glowing reviews from the influential technology columnists of The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times.

"While it's evolutionary rather than revolutionary like the first model, the changes Apple has made are generally pleasing and positive, and the device worked very well for me," the Journal's Walter Mossberg said.

Mossberg said the iPad 2 "keeps Apple ahead in the tablet race, at least for now," although he was critical of the quality of the photos taken by its still cameras and its inability to play Adobe Flash video.

Taiwan Airport Opens E-library for Transit Passengers

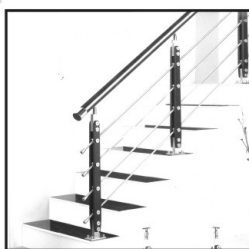
Taiwan's international airport has opened what it calls the world's first in-transit e-library, offering 400 e-book titles to ease waiting-hall boredom while showcasing the island's high-tech capabilities.

The e-library at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport allows passengers to consult the Chinese and English-language books, and around 2,000 books on paper, in a special waiting area in the larger of the airport's two terminals. The terminal commonly handles stopovers between North America and Southeast Asia.

The e-books are stored on around 30 devices, a mix of iPads and e-readers with e-ink screens. The e-books are stored in the ePub and Zinio formats. The airport is loaning out the devices on a first come first served basis. Passengers can't download the books to their own e-reader, limiting the usefulness of the service.

The shop couldn't say how many people have borrowed e-books since the library opened this week. The airport handles up to 17 million passengers a year. Availability of e-books worldwide is growing, with dramatic sales growth expected this year.

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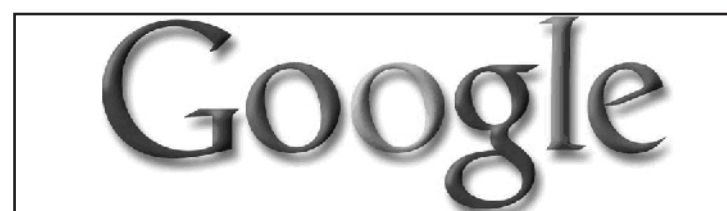
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Google Responds to the Japan Earthquake With an Online Crisis Center

Google has reacted to the devastating 8.9 magnitude earthquake that hit Japan on Friday with a tool that helps you find a person or provide information on missing persons. The site also aggregates important resources, maps and other related information.

Google has previously used the Person Finder tool, for example, during the Christchurch floods and the Egypt protests.

The Japan earthquake version of the tool currently lists about 5,500 records, but the number is rising quickly as news about the catastrophe spreads around the world. Although the tool can be useful



for finding information about a friend or a loved one, Google warns users that it doesn't review or verify the accuracy of the data. Furthermore, all data entered will be available to the public, as well as viewable and usable by everyone.

Google's Crisis Center also shows a map of the earthquake, the latest related news and lists link to warning

centers, disaster bulletin boards, and train and blackout information.

The Google Crisis Center is available here, but it also shows up on top of searches for "Japan earthquake" and similar phrases. During these times of disaster, it's good to see Google taking swift action and leveraging its vastly popular search engine to help people cope and find information.

Researching animals in wild can be challenging



Researching animals in the wild can be challenging, especially if it involves a rare or elusive species like the giant panda or the clouded leopard. To remedy this, scientists rely heavily on camera traps—automated cameras with motion sensors. Left to photograph what passes in front of them, the cameras record the diversity and very often the behavior of animals around the world. The Smithsonian has brought together more than 202,000 wildlife photos from seven projects conducted by Smithsonian researchers and their colleagues into one searchable website, siwild.si.edu. This snapshot shows a jaguar in Peru. (AFP photo)

Health & Living

Natural Ways to Lighten Your Skin



Dark spots, and freckles, and skin-damage - oh my! Looking to lighten your complexion?

Every shade of skin is beautiful, but as we grow older our skin tone can change. Freckles may appear, dark spots can arise, and skin may not be as light as it once was. So, if you're still not ready to embrace your dark side, read on for a few natural whitening tips and tricks.

Use Sunblock

One of the easiest ways to stay fair is to use sunblock on a daily basis. Find a moisturizer that includes an SPF of 15 or higher and use it every morning after washing your face. Sunblock not only prevents your skin from getting darker, but also blocks harmful UV rays that can cause cancer and premature aging. Remember your hands when applying sunblock, as they are a prime area for age spots.

Exfoliate

Exfoliating once a week will remove dead skin cells to lighten and brighten your skin. Mix two tablespoons oatmeal and two tablespoons brown sugar with a quarter cup of milk, and stir until a paste forms. Gently scrub your face, rinse, and moisturize.

Make a Mask

A homemade mask is a great way to lighten your skin and a good excuse to kick back on the couch. Try using one once a week. Use one tablespoon of each of the following: sandalwood paste, lemon juice, tomato juice, and cucumber juice. Mix them all together to form a paste. Spread the mixture on your face and wait until it dries. Rinse and moisturize for a natural glow.

Licorice Extract

Licorice extract contains glabridin, a component that acts as a natural skin whitener. Apply a thin layer of the extract morning and evening, after you wash your face and before you moisturize. Licorice extract can be found at any health food store or ordered online. Be sure to store the bottle in a cool, dark place to maintain freshness. Note: test a small amount on the back of your arm before using on your face to be sure you do not have an allergic reaction.

Remember to love your skin no matter what color it is. It's a part of who you are and that's what makes you beautiful and unique.

Number of US cancer survivors nears 12 million

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Early diagnosis, improved treatments and an aging population have combined to boost the number of cancer survivors in the United States to nearly 12 million, the US government said Thursday.

The current total of 11.7 million people who have at one time in their lives faced a diagnosis of cancer is four times the level of cancer survivors in 1971 when it was three million, said a report by the Centers for Disease Control.

"It's good news that so many are surviving cancer and

leading long, productive, and healthy lives," said CDC Director Thomas Frieden.

"Preventing cancer and detecting it early remain critically important as some cancers can be prevented or detected early enough to be effectively treated."

Seven million of the cancer survivors who were alive in 2007, the most recent year covered by the study, were over age 65.

Breast cancer survivors made up the largest single group at 22 percent, followed by prostate cancer survivors at 19 percent.

Pandemic flu still a threat, warn scientists

PARIS (AFP) — The H1N1 swine flu that swept the globe in 2009/10 could easily morph into a more transmissible form, while an older, mid-20th century virus could also come roaring back, scientists warned this week in separate studies.

The so-called Asian influenza, a H2N2 strain, first appeared in 1957 and killed one to four million people despite a major vaccination campaign.

Studies have shown that most people today aged 50 or older retain some immunity to the virus, which continues to circulate in birds and swine.

Those younger, however, are acutely vulnerable to H2N2, which increases the chance that the potentially lethal strain will jump back into humans and once again spread across the world.

"H2N2 looms as a public health threat, and could re-emerge," Gary Nobel, a researcher at the Vaccine Research Center of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and lead author of a commentary published Thursday in Nature.

Governments, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and drug companies "should develop a pre-emptive vaccination programme," he urged.

Nobel outlines three strategies for anticipating a resurgence of the bird-borne virus.

One is to manufacture the same vaccine licenced in 1957 and immediately inoculate enough of the world's population to provide what scientists call a "herd immunity" to the rest.

Alternatively, health authorities could stockpile the same vaccine in the event of an outbreak, or make "master lots" and ramp up production at the first sign of an outbreak.

Acting now would be far more cost effective than waiting for the strain to reappear, Nobel argued, citing a US government study estimating that a flu pandemic costs the United States 71 to 167 billion dollars.

In another study, published in the online science journal PLoS One, researchers at MIT in Boston led by Ram Sasisekharan identified a single mutation of the 2009 H1N1 virus that would greatly boost its ability to spread among humans.

This is precisely what happened to the original H1N1 strain, which first emerged in the fall of 1917 in a mild form before coming back nine months later in a far more deadly variant, a two-wave pattern typical of flu pandemics.

In total, the Spanish flu, as it was known, killed at least 50 million people -- fully three percent of the world's population at the time -- before subsiding, though many of those deaths were due to the absence of antibiotics.

The major factor in flu transmissibility is the structure of a protein on the surface of the virus called hemagglutinin, or "HA" for short.

The tightness of the fit between HA and the respiratory receptor cell in the human respiratory tract determines how easily the virus infects a host.

The 2009 H1N1 strain -- like the first wave of the 1918 flu -- does not bind efficiently, one of the main reasons the death toll from the recent outbreak was lower than initially feared.

But it only took one small mutation for the 1918 virus protein to become a mass killer.

The swine flu -- so named because it was first identified in pigs in Mexico -- has killed some 18,500 people since emerging in the spring of 2009, according to the WHO.

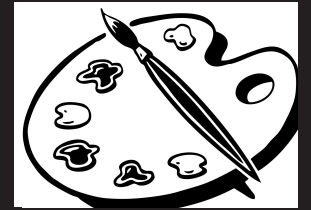
Device approved to continue blood flow during brain surgery

A device that permits the rerouting of blood flow during surgery to treat a brain aneurysm or tumor in people at greater risk of stroke has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The Excimer Laser Assisted Non-Occlusive Anastomosis (ELANA) Surgical Kit makes it possible for surgeons to bypass the aneurysm or tumor without clipping the affected artery and temporarily ending blood flow, the agency said in a news release.

About 1,000 people who have brain bypass surgery each year would be at higher-than-normal risk of stroke if the artery were clipped and blood flow stopped, the agency said. These patients -- 13 and older -- often have a

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weakened, enlarged area in a brain artery called a cerebral aneurysm, or a tumor at the base of the skull.

The ELANA kit was approved under the FDA's "Humanitarian Use Device" rules, meaning it's designed to treat or diagnose a condition that affects fewer than 4,000 people each year in the United States. Qualifying manufacturers must show that the device's benefits outweigh its risks, and that no similar device is already available.

The ELANA kit should not be used if the patient shows hardening of the arteries (arteriosclerosis) or artery calcification, the FDA warned.

The device is made by Elana, based in the Netherlands.

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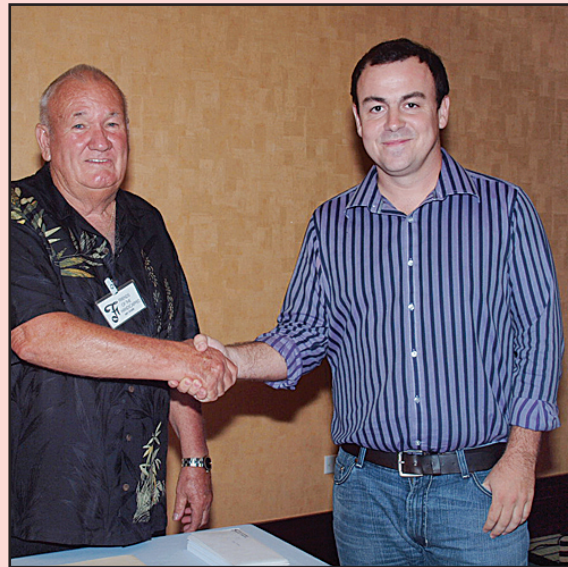
The annual occasion of the distribution of the results of months of fundraising by the Friends of the Handicapped took place at the Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa on Thursday evening, March 10. FOTH is comprised of a dedicated group of veteran island visitors who have been conducting fundraising events during their winters on Aruba for more than 20 years, and have donated over one million dollars in that time to local foundations dedicated to assisting the handicapped and those in need.

This year, FOTH President Art Stark had the pleasure of introducing a new director of CEDE Aruba, the organization which administers the funds for the various foundations. Daniel Tecklenborg has taken over with the retirement of Jan Veneman, who had departed for Holland only days before, so could not be there for the final award ceremony of 2011.

Art Stark noted that fundraising efforts were not quite as successful this year as in the past, so they also had to cut the number of foundations receiving the benefits of their efforts. FOTH made substantial donations to Imeldahof, Funari, Respeta Mi, Ambiente Feliz, Club Kibrahacha 60+, Bibito Pin, Mi Por, Sonrisa, Edward Harms Foundation, Ambiente Nobo, AVA, Red Cross, FAVI, Adopt an Addict, Thuiszorg Foundation, Aruba Autism Foundation, Hacienda and Pa Nos Muchanan (For our Children.)

Over \$40,000 was distributed to the various organization to assist them with specific projects; when the awarding was completed, Lisandra Croes, Project Coordinator for CEDE Aruba expressed deep gratitude to the volunteers of FOTH for their efforts over the years in helping so many Aruban foundations, which depend heavily on donations, to continue their important work.

The team of board members and volunteers now consists of Art Stark and his wife Alma, Philip Solomon, Sal and Maryann La Carruba, Pauline Daley, Linda Todman, David and Tana Ulmschneider, Pat and Marsha Finck, Jean and Huguette Vateiquette and Arubans Anoushka Maduro of the Casa Del Mar and Marcelino Kock, who assist them throughout the year in maintaining their program.



FOTH president Art Stark and new Director of CEDE Daniel Tecklenborg

by Rosalie Klein

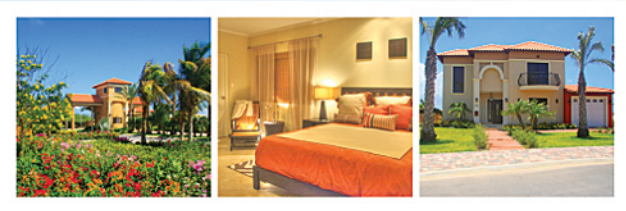
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Aruba Tourism Product gets injection of 4.9 million Aruban florins!

ORANJESTAD -- This past Thursday, Minister of Tourism, Otmar Oduber received a presentation by members of the TPEF (Product Enhancement Fund) in which an outline of the investments for 2010 were presented and a preliminary budget for 2011.

After the presentation the minister remarked that 100% of what was presented is more than 100% of what we had and 100% is going to improve the Aruba Product.

He reminded all present that the TPEF fund is a contribution of 2% from timeshare operators, which they never paid previously, and is destined for the improvement of our tourism product. This agreement was made concrete by means of a formal MOU that the minister signed with the Timeshare Association after some open and transparent conversations. As of September 1st 2010 this agreement was approved by Parliament and signed into law. The minister is convinced that this fund is going to make a remarkable differ-

FOR 2011 THE PLANNED AREAS COVER:	
▶ BEACHES	▶ Afl. 860,000 – 17.31%
▶ ENVIRONMENT	▶ Afl. 1,548,000 – 31.15%
▶ SECURITY	▶ Afl. 540,000 – 10.87%
▶ CULTURE/ ATTRACTIONS	▶ Afl. 1,210,000 – 24.35%
▶ RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT	▶ Afl. 725,000 – 14.59%
▶ CONTINGENCY/ EMERGENCY	▶ Afl. 86,340 – 1.7%
	▶ Total Afl. 4,969,340 *
	▶ * incl. roll over from 2010

ence in our tourism product.

In the past, in order to make any kind of improvements related to our tourism, this was totally dependent on the government's general covers; and, the question always was... "let's see if we can do this." The goal behind this TPEF fund is to ensure that there are always additional funds to what the government normally has been

allocating to tourism upgrading.

This means that almost 5 million Florins, which the government never received in the past, is now coming through the TPEF, which is dedicated to improving the quality of our tourism product.

Oduber expressed praise for the good work of the 7 members of the TPEF. From

the FPEF fund, 4.9 million Aruban florins will be earmarked for different projects across the island, such as for our beaches, increase the amount of beaches; improve the quality of our tourism attractions, and cleanups and security.

Being a bit more specific, Oduber mentioned that among the improvements earmarked is the placement

of security cameras in the hotel areas as well as a program especially for lifeguards. In an effort to prevent accidents at sea, the proper training of lifeguards is essential. The minister also made mention of keeping our tourism areas clean. He used the Baby Beach as an example. He himself and members of the TPEF recently visited the Baby Beach and is of the opinion that, indeed it is a Baby Beach, uniquely different from the other beaches. But, says Oduber, there is still much room for improvement. Other areas also in need of improvement are Casibari, Ayo, Gold Mine and other tourism attractions.

In conclusion, Otmar Oduber said: ... "I am extremely pleased with this presentation. Now, together with my advisors of the Tourism Council, I will meet around the table and get feedback so that within two weeks we can get back to you with a budget and later present this to Parliament for approval so we can begin appropriating these funds."

COMICS



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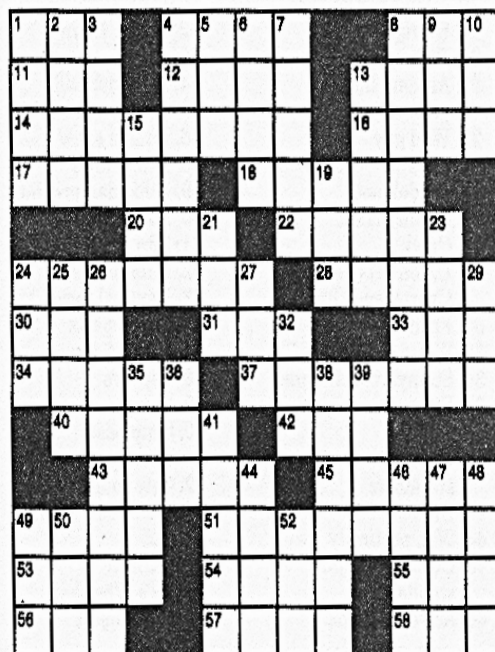
ACROSS

1. Thick mass of hair
4. Ravens' cries
8. Broadway sign
11. Altar vow
12. On the apex
13. Epidermis
14. Broad-brimmed hat
16. Yearn
17. Foot the bill
18. Reverie
20. Set or stream
22. Buzzwords
24. Humiliates
28. Hull parts
30. _____ glance
31. Racket
33. Squealer
34. "_____ on Broadway"
37. Meals
40. Tempted
42. Singer Shannon
43. Hindu robes
45. Dressed to the _____
49. College cheers
51. Tam-o-_____ (Scottish caps)
53. Two-wheeler
54. Borecole
55. Composer Ayer
56. David's palace guard
57. Food fish

DOWN

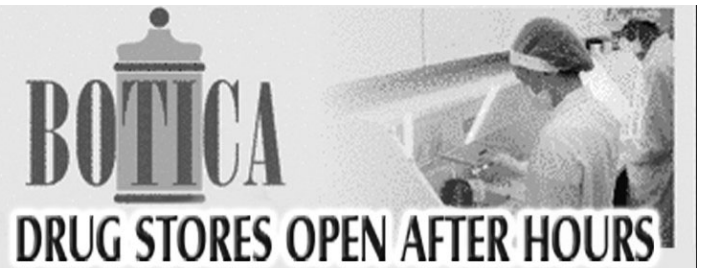
1. "Gorillas in the _____"
2. Scent
3. Fleshy fruit
4. Menus
5. Ingested
6. Dictionary entry
7. Big spender
8. Straw hats
9. _____ Tin Tin
10. Unit
13. Trunk item
15. California peninsula
19. "_____ and Meek" (comic strip)
21. Spread hay
23. Bed part
24. Small amount
25. And others: abbr.
26. Head scarf
27. "Little _____ Echo"
29. Fleet and Bourbon: abbr.
32. Hammett's Beaumont
35. Obliterate
36. Indian weight
38. Wrote longhand
39. Touched down
41. Computer adjuncts
44. Iranian ruler, once

46. State bird of Hawaii
47. Geologic divisions
48. Speedy transports
49. Baseball statistics: abbr.
50. Ventilate
52. Wing



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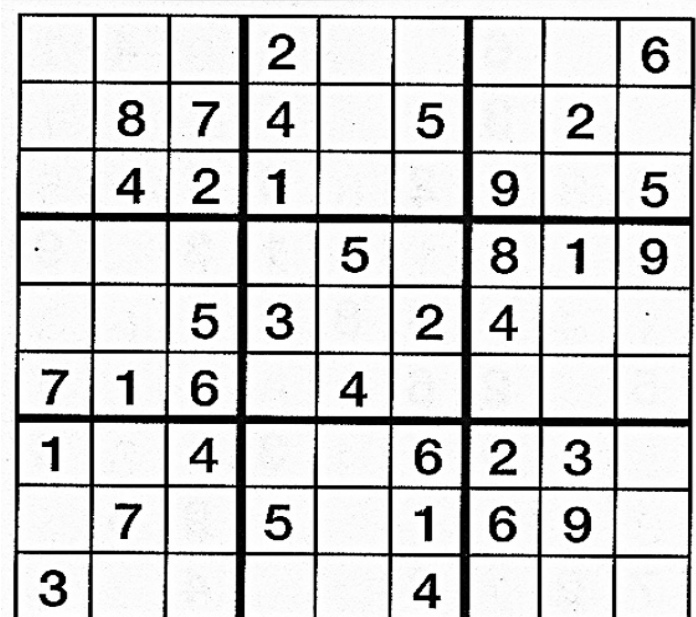
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SOLUTION

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3
8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1
7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	1	8	7	9	5	3	2	4
9	8	6	3	7	1	2	4	5
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2
5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9. A number is Never repeated in a row or column. In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9



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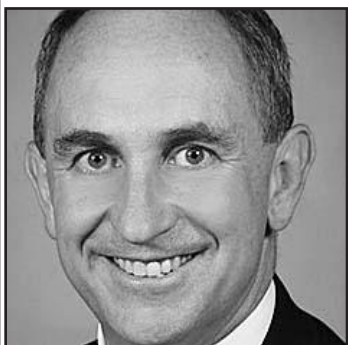
FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) – Record results by luxury automaker BMW highlighted the power of the German export machine on the weekend as China emerged as a bigger market for German industry than the United States.



BMW posted record revenues and net profit for 2010, in part owing to an 85.3 percent jump in sales to China, Hong Kong and Taiwan while Germany as a whole saw total exports soar 24.2 percent in January.

=====

GM financial chief leaves after one year



DETROIT, Michigan (AFP) – General Motors chief financial officer Chris Liddell, a key architect of the automaker's revival after its 2008-09 near-collapse, announced his resignation after one year in the job.

The former Microsoft executive who turned to the auto industry to help with GM's \$49.5 billion government bailout and reorganization is leaving after the company reported its fourth straight profitable quarter

=====

Areva, Rolls-Royce unveil nuclear reactor deal

LONDON, England (AFP) – French nuclear group Areva and Rolls-Royce agreed a deal yesterday for the British engineering firm to manufacture components for reactors in Britain which is renewing its ageing network of nuclear plants.



Areva said the agreement could be expanded to cover nuclear projects in other countries.

Its chief executive Anne Lauvergeon said the deal would make Rolls-Royce one of its "major industrial partners."

=====

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Latin America and Caribbean regions to invest \$500 Million to prepare for natural disasters

FINANCIAL DISASTER preparedness is a growing concern in Latin America and the Caribbean. Last year the region saw devastating earthquakes in Chile and Haiti and an active hurricane season that impacted Central America and Mexico. In addition, the La Niña-related weather phenomenon has brought severe flooding to Venezuela, Colombia and Brazil, among others.

Natural disasters can put a country's fiscal accounts in disarray, undermining the government's ability to respond to emergencies and implement actions to restore or mitigate the impact of such catastrophes on human life and the economy.

At the request of the governments of several member countries, the IDB has developed a financial risk management approach for natural disasters, aimed to help the countries be better prepared to deal with emergencies caused by catastrophic natural events.

The IDB approach is focused in developing tailor-



A resident walks through street flooded due to heavy thunderstorms

made integrated programs to help the countries' governments to better manage these financial risks, through the implementation of different innovative financing instruments and mechanisms, such as the Contingent Credit Facility and the Natural Disaster Insurance Facilities.

Currently, the Bank is working with 13 member countries to support their efforts to improve their disaster risk management capability and efficiency. Through the mentioned facilities, it is ex-

pected to provide during 2011 more than \$500 million in financing to help the region meet extraordinary expenditures that may arise during emergencies caused by natural disasters of severe or catastrophic magnitude.

The IDB has already approved a \$100 million loan for the Dominican Republic under its Contingent Credit Facility. During this year, the Bank will consider further contingent loans for Peru, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama and Honduras, totaling \$500 million.

ECB board member moots single EU debt agency

FRANKFURT, Germany (AFP) – A senior European Central Bank director called yesterday for a single debt agency to issue eurozone bonds and oversee budget policies, as leaders of the 17-nation bloc met in Brussels to bolster the euro.

ECB executive board member Lorenzo Bini Smaghi used a speech in Lucca, Italy to float the idea of "a supranational entity in the euro area to issue government bonds for the member states."

The idea is likely to meet opposition from Germany, which maintains that each eurozone country must be responsible for its own financing.

Bini Smaghi argued that the plan he put forth would ensure fiscal discipline because "countries would in fact no longer have the capacity, tech-

nically or politically, to issue public debt on the market.

"This could be a first step towards a single European bond," the ECB executive added, an idea vehemently opposed by Germany and other northern European countries.

He spoke as eurozone leaders met to agree on at least the broad lines of the greater economic policy coordination needed to tame the bloc's dogged debt crisis.

Greece, bailed out last year by the EU and International Monetary Fund, called on its peers to take "strong European decisions to calm the markets," but expectations were for general accord only, not specific measures.

Bini Smaghi acknowledged his idea was "almost a provocation," but said it would not necessarily force countries to integrate their budget policies

or adhere to an integrated tax system.

"What is in common is just the tap, i.e. an integrated system of securities for issuing on the market the proceeds from which are then allocated to individual countries, according to joint decision-making mechanisms," he said.

YESTERDAY'S Crossword Answer



Acqua Condominium Aruba nears completion of its East Tower



Palm Beach – Acqua Condominium Aruba, a project spearheaded by well-established local realtors, Homenet Real Estate, announced recently that construction has been progressing at a brisk pace, as three more floors have been poured in the past five weeks, since builders returned from their well-deserved Christmas holidays.

The East Tower, overlooking Palm Beach boasts 208

condos, spread over 14 floors. The two top building floors embrace 16 penthouse apartments with majestic views. The building in its entirety is scheduled to conclude construction at the end of this year. Then following the completion of the elegant club house, the tropical landscaped pool and the spacious parking lots in April of 2011, condos will be delivered to their proud new owners.

A spokesperson for Homenet Real Estate reports that the project enjoys much attention this Winter season, and is visited regularly by snow-birds longing to make their dream of a vacation-home on the island, come true.

Making the decision on a purchase, and acting on it fast, was recently made even more imperative. In November of 2010, the island government of Aruba reiterated its commit-



ment to a building moratorium for the next 10 years, making Acqua Condominium a truly unique investment opportunity, as it is the one and only high-rise condo project, on property land, in the island's most-desired location.

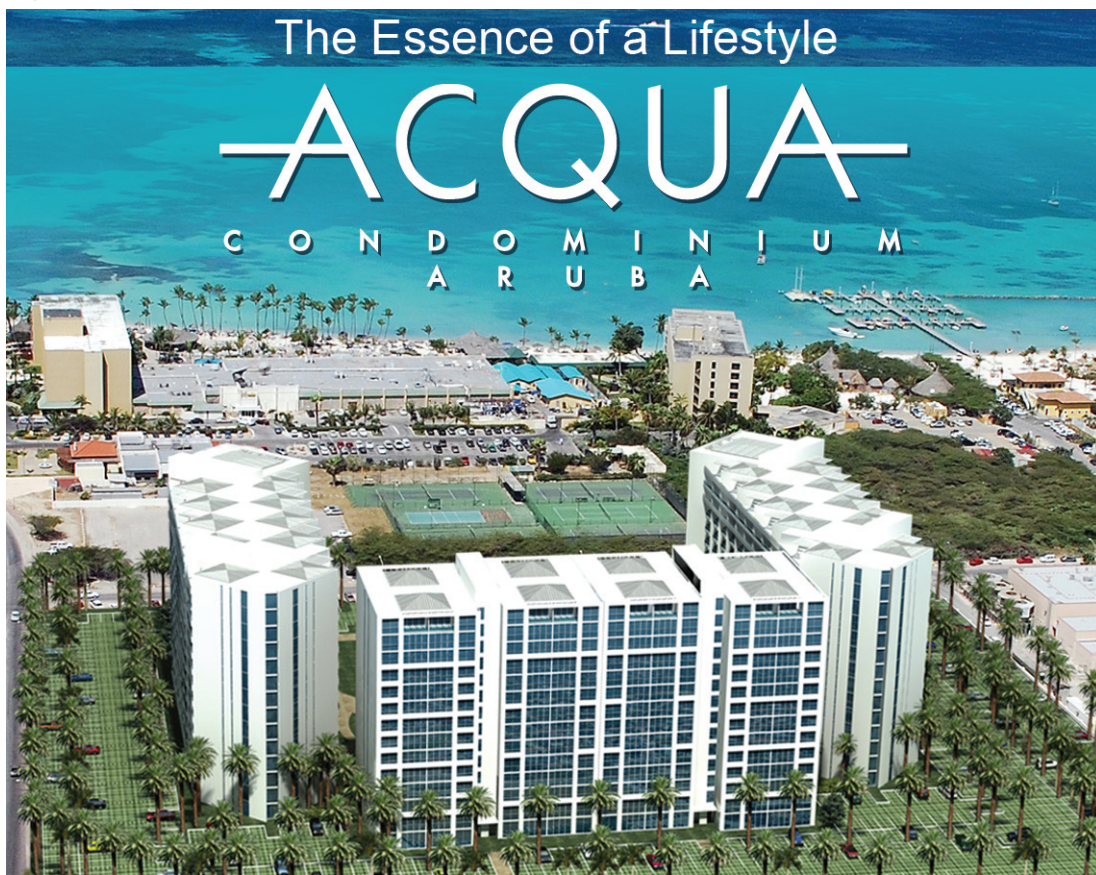
In view of the moratorium news, and the project's lucrative position, developers were impelled to call the pre-construction discounts off. Nevertheless other purchase incentives were introduced, such as a time-share trade in. A number of time-share projects may be traded in, the spokesperson explains, with certain restrictions. Also a profitable deal is available to buyers in which they may place their unit in a rental pool with a guaranteed 6-months income, for the first year.

If the image of Aqua Condominium tugs at your heartstrings, you are invited to visit the sales gallery and the two elegant model-suites available for viewing, fully finished with luxurious touches and high-end amenities.

The sales center is open daily from 8:30 a.m to 5:30 p.m and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.. Meet the sales team who will guide you through the purchase of the stylish condo of your dreams, allowing you to return to Aruba as often as you wish.

You will find the website very helpful with all legal documents, floor plans, furnishings and finishings, posted on line: www.acquaruba.com

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The Queen's offers an authentic taste of Aruba!



Varella, Luisa and the next generation of chef

One of the distinctions of Aruban cuisine is incorporating unique indigenous ingredients such as in Wild Cucumber Stew and a particular light fish chowder accompanied by the local specialties pan bati (corn meal pancake) and funchi (the local version of polenta.) Thus, eating out at the authentically Aruban res- tau-

into local cuisine. "We will definitely return to The Queen's," they affirmed, "the food was delicious and the prices are more than right."

The menu sports a variety of steaks and tenderloin, fresh caught seafood, Caribbean lobster, and of course, one of our favorites, and what we consider a true test of local cui-



Keeshi Yena with plantains & vegetables

rant, The Queen's, is very affordable, with a true taste of regional cuisine.

Owner Varella Innocencia confesses she opened her restaurant in Oranjestad because "I grew up with this, and loved serving people our island food. My father and mother operated the little restaurant across from the Americana, which some may remember, the original Arawak. I remember how much our customers loved trying the local food, and they especially loved the prices!"

Varella's mom, Luisa, is still in the kitchen, conjuring up the delicious dishes that have been in her family for generations, which is acknowledged on the menu with "Carni Stoba di Mamachi"- "Grandma's Beef Stew," and their Arawak Steak.

We also bumped into island visitors Jim and Callie from Michigan, who were eager to try island food, and were more than pleased with their venture

sine, "Keshi Yena"- "Filled Cheese." This is a tasty, filling stew of chicken, with other ingredients that are handy that day, all incased in a thick skin of melted Gouda. It was very satisfying and particularly memorable paired with The Queen's garlic bread and very special Pica, a mix of chopped onions and the famous local hot pepper, Madame Janette. Not overly spicy, it lent that perfect bit of tang to this deliciously picturesque meal.

Located next to the Harbor at the end of the Weststraat, The Queen's is open from 11:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., daily, offering indoor and outdoor dining. They also have daily specials, aside from an extensive menu; made from whatever is in season.

We noticed a steady stream of islanders coming for lunch in the pleasant surroundings or picking up take-out containers; always a sure sign of a winner is where the locals like to eat!

Items from Dutch Queen's estate go under the hammer

THE HAGUE, The Netherlands (AFP) — A porcelain dinner service thought to be worth up to 60,000 euros (\$83,000) is among some 10,000 objects from the estate of the late Dutch Queen Juliana to go under the hammer for charity on Monday, the Sotheby's auction house said.

"It is the first time that so many items from the House of Orange (as the Dutch royal house is known) go under the hammer," Sotheby's spokeswoman Eva van Geldorp told AFP.

To be sold in 1,540 lots, that include a golden vanity case with an engraving of the letter "J" for the queen of the Netherlands from 1948 to 1980, the proceeds of the auction will go to charities including the Red Cross.

The sale is expected to raise about 1.5 million euros.

Lot 86, a dinner service of 266 pieces in white porcelain adorned with Italian landscapes in pink, has the highest



estimated price of between 40,000 and 60,000 euros.

"Most of the lots are estimated to be worth between 100 and 1,000 euros", the cheapest being 25 euros, said Van Geldorp. "This means that anyone can acquire an object that previously belonged to the House of Orange."

The charities were chosen by the heirs of Juliana who died at the age of 94 in 2004: reigning Queen Beatrix and

her three sisters, the princesses Irene, Margriet and Christina.

"Juliana always wanted to be a normal person," said historian Han van Bree. "She never wanted to be called 'Your Majesty', but 'Madam'," he said, adding that Juliana frequently travelled by bicycle.

"People always said that if she hadn't become queen, she would have worked in welfare."

Daylight Saving Time this weekend

WASHINGTON -- This weekend, the clocks spring forward into daylight saving time -- the bittersweet adjustment that brightens the evenings while wreaking havoc on sleep schedules.

The clock is forward by 60 minutes during the wee hours of Sunday -- at 2 a.m. local time.

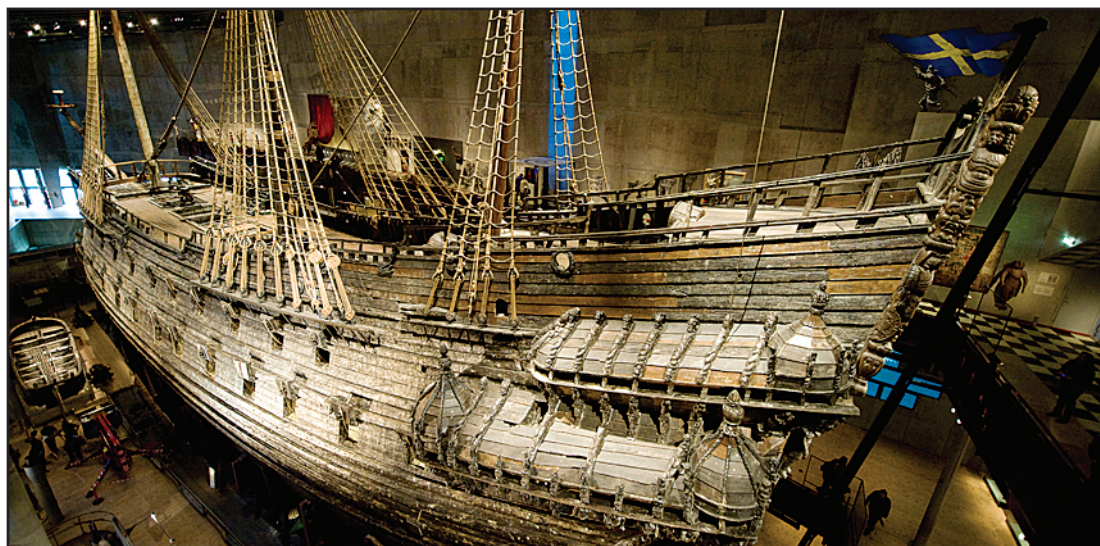
Daylight-saving time ends Nov. 6

Less sleep Sunday

Don't forget to set clocks ahead one hour at 2 a.m. Sunday.



Sweden's Vasa warship set for make over



SWEDEN, Stockholm : The Vasa is displayed at the Vasa Museum in Stockholm. Sweden's 17th century royal warship Vasa, which sank in 1628 and was brought to the surface three centuries later, began undergoing a major refurbishment on Thursday, museum officials said. The Vasa was commissioned by Swedish King Gustav II Adolf in 1625 and was designed to be the mightiest warship in the world. It was armed with 64 guns on two gun decks, but did not have enough ballast to counteract the weight and sank just minutes after setting sail on its maiden voyage. A Swedish shipwreck enthusiast, Anders Franzen, located it in 1956 at a depth of 32 meters. (AFP PHOTO)

Lion-hearted Tigers stun England in thriller



Bangladesh cricketers Mahmudullah (L) and Shafiul Islam celebrate after scoring the winning runs in the ICC Cricket World Cup 2011 match between England and Bangladesh
AFP PHOTO

NEW DELHI (AFP) - Lion-hearted Bangladesh stunned England by two wickets on Friday to keep alive their World Cup quarter-final hopes and set-up a nail-biting race to qualify from Group B.

On a rollercoaster night in Chittagong, Bangladesh, chasing just 226 to win, were cruising at 155-3 when opener Imrul Kayes, on 60, attempted a second run off Paul Collingwood but was beaten by a flat, sharp throw from Ajmal Shahzad.

That precipitated a collapse to 169-8, but tailenders Shafiul Islam (24) and Mohammad Mahmudullah (21) put on 58 for the ninth wicket to win with six balls to spare.

If England had won, they would have gone into the last eight along with group leaders India.

India can make sure of their place with victory over South Africa in Bangalore on Saturday while England have a tough clash with West Indies in Chennai next Thursday that could decide their fate.

"We wanted to win this game and win it well," said England skipper Andrew Strauss.

"We struggled a little bit with the bat although I thought 225 was a competitive total. We needed to bowl and field well but didn't do that as well as we would have liked.

"We got ourselves in a great position to win the game but in the end we couldn't take those final two wickets."

Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan praised his unlikely match-winners.

"I thought Mahmudullah

and Shafiul batted exceptionally well. At one stage we thought we'd lost the game but they showed their character, how tough they are and how hard-working," said Shakib.

India have seven points at the head of Group B with the West Indies on six after seeing off Ireland in Mohali.

England are third with five points from five games, one ahead of South Africa (four points in three games) and Bangladesh (four points in four).

Earlier, Jonathan Trott and Eoin Morgan defied Bangladesh's spinners with half-centuries as England were bowled out for 225.

Trott hit 67 and left-hander Morgan, who arrived in Chittagong on Tuesday to replace the injured Kevin Pietersen, hit a fluent 63 off 72 balls.

The duo put on 109 for the fourth wicket after England, sent in to bat on a sluggish pitch at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium, slipped to 53-3 in the 17th over.

In Mohali, big-hitting Kieron Pollard nudged West Indies closer to the quarter-finals as his side defeated Ireland by 44 runs.

Pollard hammered 94 off just 55 balls and shared an 88-run stand with Devon Smith (107), who hit a maiden one-day century, as West Indies posted 275 before bowling out the Irish for 231.

Ed Joyce, who played for England in the 2007 World Cup, made a 106-ball 84, containing nine fours and put on 109 for the fourth wicket with Gary Wilson (61).

"We batted, bowled and fielded pretty well, but Pollard struck the ball pretty clean. It was a good innings and it got them some good momentum," said Ireland captain William Porterfield.

Pollard said he was happy to keep proving his critics wrong.

"This innings is for the people who have supported me. What's been said about me (as a Twenty20 specialist), that's just history for me. I go out there and do my best."

South Africa are hoping for a repeat of Nagpur magic when they meet India in a World Cup Group B clash on Saturday as the Proteas attempt to get their campaign back on track.

Last year, South Africa thrashed India by an innings in a Test, with paceman Dale Steyn playing a key role with 10 wickets in the match.

"I think our bowlers have had a good amount of success against India. We know each other pretty well after playing them the whole summer (at home). This is the ground where our bowlers have had success," said captain Graeme Smith.

Ronaldo set to play against Lyon - Mourinho

MADRID (AFP) - Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho expects fellow Portuguese Cristiano Ronaldo to play against Lyon in the crucial Champions League last-16 match on Wednesday despite recently suffering a thigh injury.

"If Cristiano had to play tomorrow he wouldn't because he is not fully fit, but I am sure he will play next Wednesday after training on



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Vonn finishes third in World Cup giant slalom



(L-R) Denise Karbon of Italy, Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany and Lindsey Vonn of the US celebrate in the finish area after the women's giant slalom of the FIS World Cup on March 11, 2011 in Spindleruv Mlyn. Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany won the race ahead of Denise Karbon of Italy and Lindsey Vonn placed 3rd. AFP PHOTO

SPINDLERUV MLYN, Czech Republic (AFP) - Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany won the women's alpine skiing World Cup giant slalom here on Friday, ahead of Denise Karbon of Italy and Lindsey Vonn of the United States.

The 100 points for the win meant that Rebensburg moved ahead of France's Tessa Worley atop the giant slalom standings. Worley's hopes were dashed when she failed to finish the first run.

The German now has a 77-point lead with just the Lenzerheide giant slalom to come next week.

Rebensburg produced a stunning time in the first leg to carve out a big lead and she then had the best time again in the second to win by 1.26sec from Karbon, who clinched a podium finish for

the first time in 18 months.

"I was so disappointed with the World Championships, especially as it was for me at home, But I was able to quickly re-focus on the World Cup," she said.

"Next week will be vital for the giant slalom World Cup title and with the lead I have there is no point in changing the way I ski.

"In retrospect I think it has done me a world of good these last few weeks trying to be more versatile.

"Next year I intend to compete more often in the downhill and super-G."

It was also a profitable day for Vonn, who made it six podium finishes in a row, allowing her to close to within 38 points of overall World Cup leader Germany's Maria Riesch with five races to go.

Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday."

Ronaldo, 26, left the field in the 76th minute of Real's league encounter with Malaga on March 3 after suffering a muscular injury in his left thigh.

Mourinho is set to leave the striker on the sidelines this weekend when Real face Hercules in La Liga in the hope he can battle back to match fitness for Wednesday,

when a place in the quarter-finals is at stake.

Lyon held Real to a 1-1 draw at the Stade Gerland last week, meaning there is everything to play for during the second leg at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Nine-time winners Real have fallen at the last 16 stage in each of their last six seasons, and Lyon eliminated Real 2-1 at this stage of the competition last year.

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Fit Beckham unsure of post-MLS future



LOS ANGELES (AFP) - English midfielder David Beckham says he is healthy entering his final season with the Los Angeles Galaxy but uncertain whether or not he has played his last for an English club.

In an online chat with fans on ESPN's website Friday, the 35-year-old superstar said he is ready for Tuesday's Major League Soccer season opener at Seattle, his fifth campaign in the US league.

"I'm excited. I'm ready for the season," Beckham said. "I wanted to make sure my fitness was right. That's why I went to Tottenham. I've been working hard."

Beckham, who has scored nine goals for the Galaxy after prior star stints at Manchester United and Real

Madrid, missed six months because of a torn left Achilles' tendon.

Asked if he might yet play again for an English club after his training stint with Tottenham earlier this year, Beckham was non-committal but clearly indicated he could see extending his career beyond this MLS season.

"Who knows? I had a great career in England for 12-13 years," Beckham said. "I've always said that I never wanted to play for another English club, because Manchester United is such a great club. I'm getting older now and I don't have many years left. This is my last contract year but who knows what will happen."

Beckham said he thinks being able to experience the game's growth in US markets has been beneficial, especially as he has played a role in it.

"Soccer not being the No. 1 sport in this country, it's always going to be a challenge to raise the profile of it," he said. "I always said it won't happen over night. It will happen in 5-10 years."

"Over time it will get to be one of the better leagues. That's an exciting prospect. There is no reason that can't happen over time."

"I've enjoyed playing for the Galaxy. It has been incredible."

Yao working toward return to Rockets

HOUSTON (AFP) - Chinese giant Yao Ming has not given up hope on making a return to the NBA Houston Rockets after his latest injury setback, saying that he expects to return to on-court workouts in 10 weeks.

In remarks posted on the team's website, Yao said he will attempt to make a comeback with the Rockets after suffering a stress fracture in his

left foot on November 10 in a loss at Washington and playing only five games this season.

"I will try continuing," Yao said. "A lot will depend on this foot."

Yao underwent surgery in December after a fifth consecutive season that was interrupted by bone injuries, including a major operation to reconstruct the left foot before last season.

Firestone back as IndyCar tire supplier



INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana (AFP) - IndyCar has signed a two-year contract extension with Bridgestone Americas to keep its Firestone brand as its only tire supplier, reversing the firm's decision last week to end the deal.

IndyCar chief executive officer Randy Bernard announced the renewal on Friday after a week of talks with Bridgestone in the wake of a revolt by team owners forcing a return to talks with the tiremaker after hope appeared dead.

"IndyCar called a meeting to inform the team owners of Firestone's departure," said Dennis Reinbold, co-owner of Dreyer and Reinbold Racing.

"We encouraged IndyCar to check with Firestone to see if there might be any chance to continue. We feel that it is important to maintain conti-

nuity.

"Team owners are collectively very relieved that Firestone had an open mind and that they were able to reach this agreement."

The tiremaker pulled out of Formula One in 2010 and even though it will now supply tires through 2013, Firestone will still withdraw from IndyCar as a financial sponsor when that contract expires after the 2011 season.

Firestone had been IndyCar's tire supplier since it was formed in 1996 and with its predecessor, ChampCar, for

many years before that.

"I'm happy to say we walk as one with Firestone," Bernard said. "We feel that this new supply agreement will benefit everyone."

The move comes as IndyCar prepares to debut a new chassis and engine package for 2012, allowing teams to handle that transition before potentially needing to deal with new wheels as well.

"We're pleased that we were able to reach this agreement," said Al Speyer, Firestone Racing's executive director.



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Gridiron union set to decertify: report

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The National Football League Players Association plans to decertify as a bargaining unit, setting up a potential protracted court fight with club owners, ESPN reported Friday.

Union executive director DeMaurice Smith warned players in a conference call that they were planning to make the move, according to the report, which came as owners and players were in their 16th day of talks with a federal mediator.

Billionaire owners and millionaire athletes have been unable to agree on how to divide \$9.1 billion in annual income from America's most popular spectator sport at a time when US unemployment stands at 8.9 percent.

The NFL could be set for its first labor shutdown since 1987.

The current labor contract, twice extended last week, would expire just before midnight on Friday but the union had only until the close of business hours on Friday to

decertify and become a trade association.

The move, if paperwork plans are completed, would essentially wipe out any progress made in talks and force players to take owners to court to solve working conditions issues, a switch from negotiation to litigation.

With appeals and various legal moves, that could set the stage for a lengthy legal fight that could threaten the chance of having a deal in place by September when the regular season would typi-

cally start.

Owners could still lock out the players once the contract expires, although that move would likely be challenged by players in court.

Smith and NFL commissioner Roger Goodell and met with mediator George Cohen on Friday morning to bring the sides back from the brink.

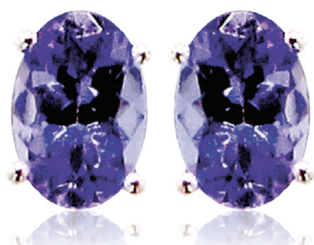
NFL owners, who already take \$1 billion off the top of annual revenues for operating expenses, are pushing for an-

other \$800 million, saying it is needed to bolster construction costs for new stadiums built in recent years, many with taxpayer financial support after an implicit club relocation threat.

The players, who make 60 percent of revenues after that first \$1 billion, see that grab as a salary slashing move. And they have been rebuffed in requests for NFL clubs to open their books and defend the request

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